MARVEL

THE ULTIMATES

16

CAMP
FRIGERI | BLEE

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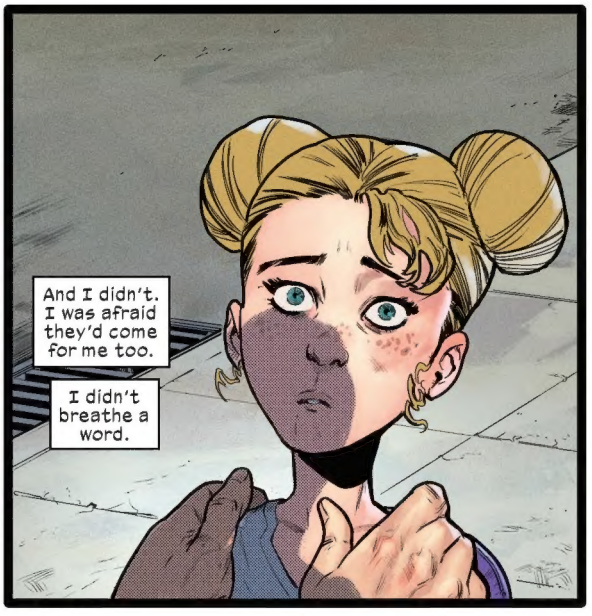
Wren! Get down here!
What?!
That was your school. They say you're barely showing up!
Can you explain this, Wren?
Calm down, guys. There are more important things than school.
What could be more important than school?
school.

The only teacher who ever taught me anything worth knowing was Ms. Walters.
She taught sixth-grade civics and had a thing for *free thought*.
Our textbook was full of the usual stuff: a gleaming new system rising from the ruins of obviously unworkable democracy.
"A perfect, intricate machine, scrutable only to super-geniuses, which took the awful burden of governance off people." *Blah blah blah.*
But Ms. Walters didn't *follow* the book.
She taught us about elections, the Magna Carta and the universal rights of man.
The old system had flaws, but ours does too, and it's important to recognize them.
She was young, and she cared, and everybody loved her.
We cried our eyes out the day the no-faced men dragged her kicking and screaming from the classroom.

When I told my parents what happened, my dad said:
Don't breathe a word of this to anyone. Not one word.

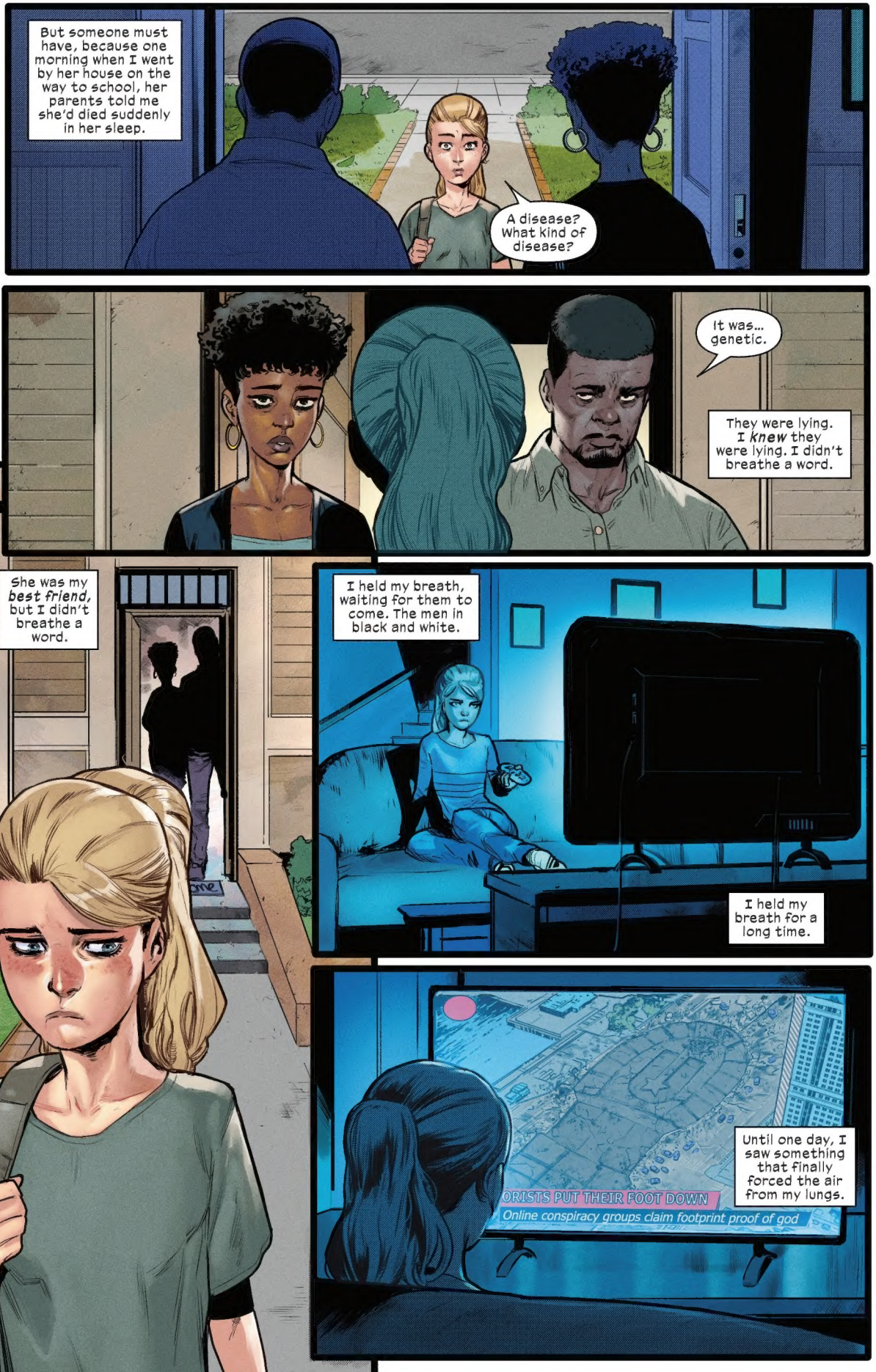

And I didn't. I was afraid they'd come for me too.
I didn't breathe a word.

But Mia had seen it herself. So I had someone to not talk about it with.

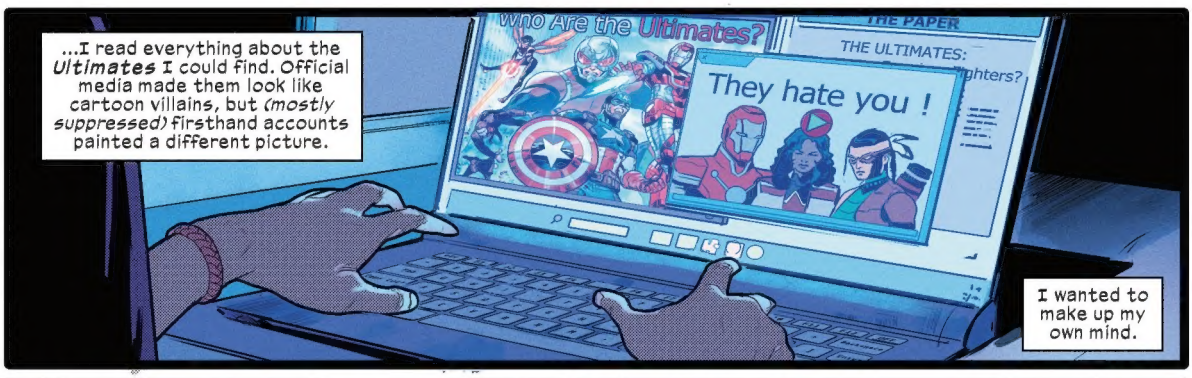
Mia was my best friend since forever. We shared everything--toys, clothes, nightmares. As babies, we took *baths* together.

When we were 14, I got boobs, and Mia grew gills under her armpits.

She was scared and confused. I didn't know what to say.
It doesn't matter. Everything's going to be okay.
I didn't breathe a word.

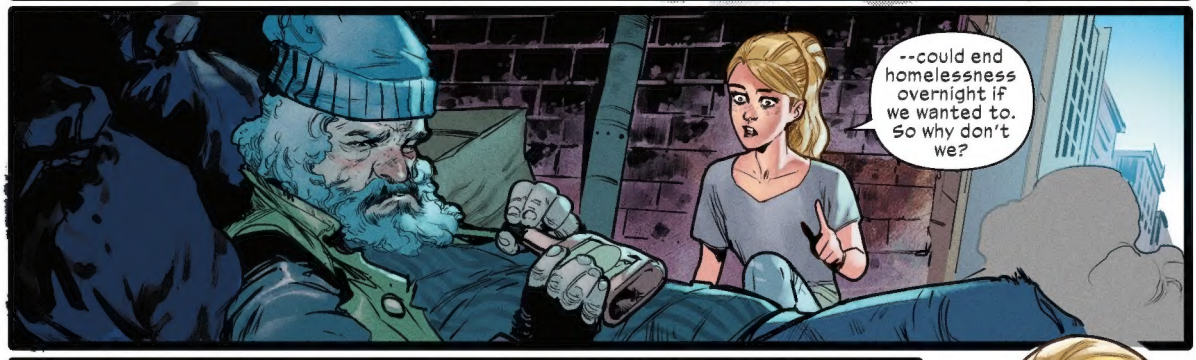

But someone must have, because one morning when I went by her house on the way to school, her parents told me she'd died suddenly in her sleep.
A disease? What kind of disease?
It was... genetic.
They were lying. I *knew* they were lying. I didn't breathe a word.
She was my *best friend*, but I didn't breathe a word.
I held my breath, waiting for them to come. The men in black and white.
I held my breath for a long time.
Until one day, I saw something that finally forced the air from my lungs.
ORISTS PUT THEIR FOOT DOWN
Online conspiracy groups claim footprint proof of god

NOW.
DING DONG
Wait!
Don't open the door, Dad.
What? Why?
What did you do?
BANG BANG BANG
After I saw that news broadcast...


...I read everything about the *Ultimates* I could find. Official media made them look like cartoon villains, but *(mostly suppressed)* firsthand accounts painted a different picture.
Who Are the Ultimates?
THE PAPER
THE ULTIMATES:
They hate you !
I wanted to make up my own mind.

--took responsibility for the power outages, so why would they deny the Stark Tower incident?
FedUlx
I started asking questions I probably shouldn't have...

--HEAR OF THE SAVAGE LAND? ROXXON POISONED A PARADISE. IS IT EVIL TO STOP THEM? ISN'T IT MORE EVIL *NOT* TO?

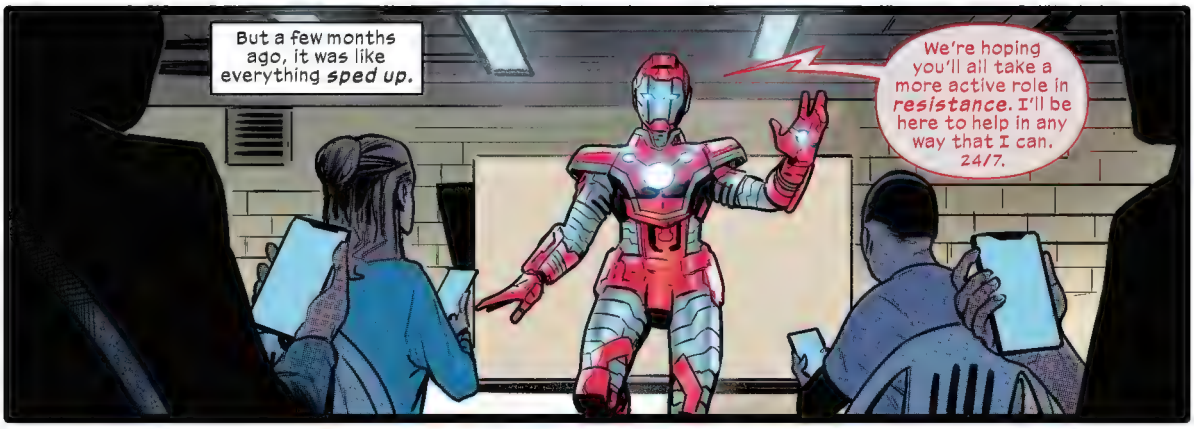

--could end homelessness overnight if we wanted to. So why don't we?

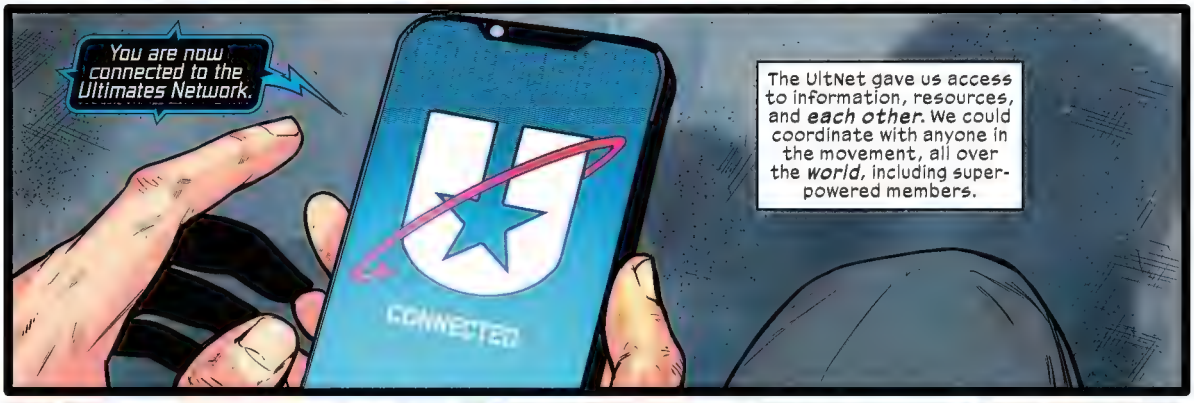
My parents didn't like it.
What do you think you're doing?! You're going to get yourself in trouble!
I don't want to hear another word about the Ultimates in this house.
So I didn't breathe a word.

Around my *parents* anyway. But I kept digging.
I couldn't reach the Ultimates, but I found out there had been people--*normal people*--demanding democracy in the North American Union for as long as there had been a ***North American Union.***
Which was news to me. So much for ***school.***
Password?
Of the people, by the people, for the people.
The groups were small, isolated and ***invite only.***
They could throw you into one of those Midas prisons indefinitely, just on suspicion of membership.
--conspiracy to rob us of our rights. I believe I've found evidence that world leaders were coerced--
The first meeting I went to, I waited for blurred faces to come drag us away.
Password?
I kept waiting. But I kept coming back.

It didn't take long to realize that having meetings was pretty much all these people had done for the last sixty years.
--move that we form a committee to research the possibility of circulating a petition!
But the Ultimates had lit a fire. I saw more and more new faces--younger, angrier, hungry for *action*.
--how stupid do they think we are?! Like we can't see what's right in front of our faces?!
--and I never saw her again. It was like she never existed.
People like me.
Even the old-timers seemed newly energized.
They treat us like children!
We'd all been inspired by the Ultimates.

Then we *became* Ultimates.
Together we can fix the world!
Things were looser then. This was before the *UltNet*, before the handbook, before the infrastructure had really been put in place.
I think Iron Lad might have been dead at the time, though he isn't anymore.
We were still mostly on our own, but we had *purpose*.
We started small.
ULTIMATES UNITE
And the rockets' red glare!
The bombs bursting in air!
Wheatpasting, minor vandalism, simple sabotage.

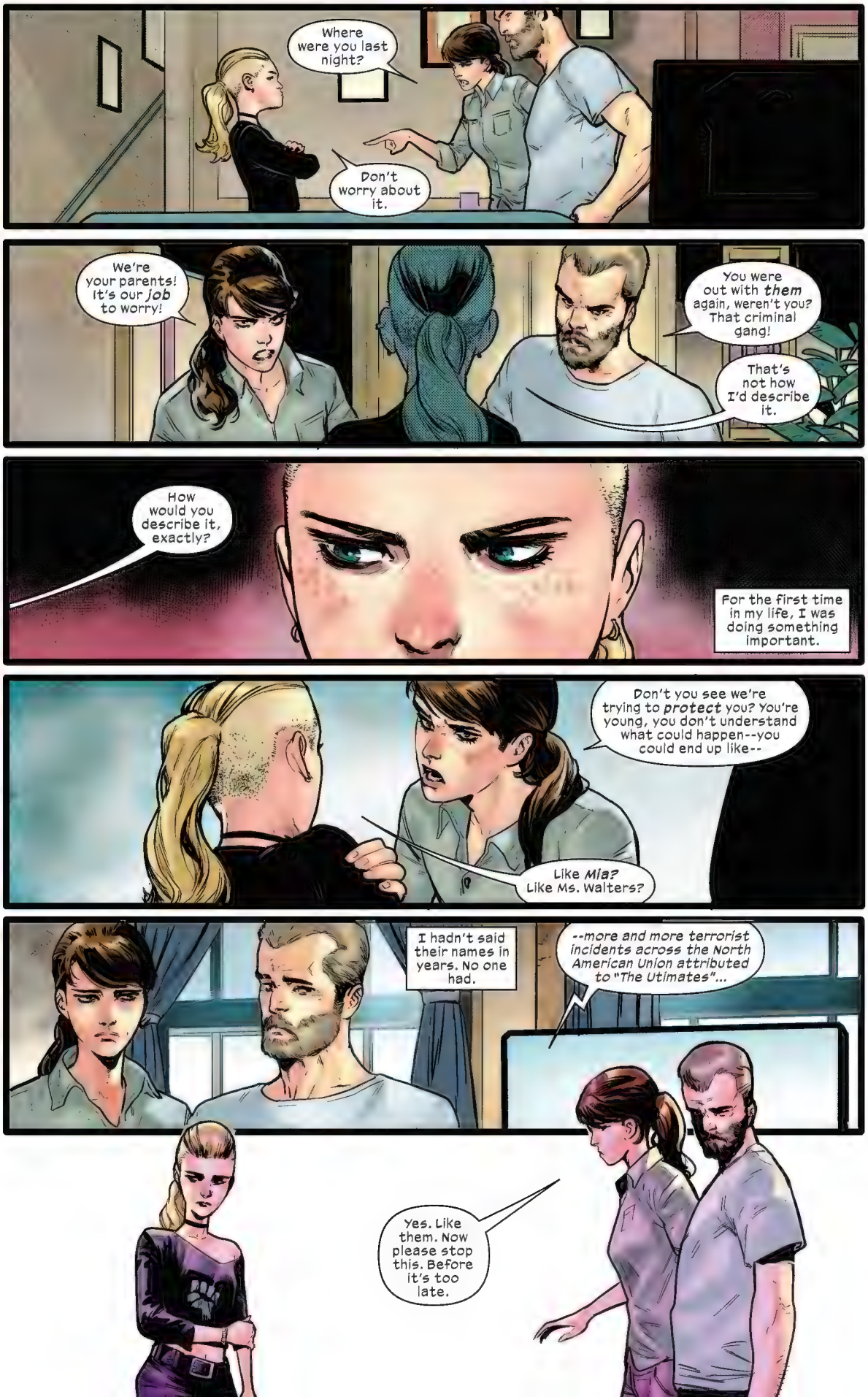

But a few months ago, it was like everything *sped up.*
We're hoping you'll all take a more active role in *resistance.* I'll be here to help in any way that I can. 24/7.


You are now connected to the Ultimates Network.
CONNECTED
The UltNet gave us access to information, resources, and *each other.* We could coordinate with anyone in the movement, all over the *world,* including super-powered members.

Once, I was part of a group that set up the diversion while Hawkeye assassinated a high-ranking Roxxon executive passing through town.

And another time, I'm pretty sure I hid *Captain America* in my basement for a few hours till the heat died down, though he denied it.
C'mon. You *are* him. You've gotta be.
I don't know what you mean, Miss. My name's *Brett Hendrick.* I fix washing machines.

And we had our own initiatives.
KABOOM
Our big swing was blowing up a government building. Planned it for a *month*.
It was mostly symbolic. No fatalities--we gave them a thirty-minute warning to evacuate.
Made the news for weeks.
ULTIMATES CLAIM CREDIT FOR LOCAL BOMBING. PERPETRATORS STILL AT LARGE.
My parents didn't know exactly what was going on, but they could see the changes.
You have to *stop*. Whatever it is you're doing--you have to stop right now!
Stop what?
I *couldn't* stop. Not after I'd come so far.


Where were you last night?
Don't worry about it.
We're your parents! It's our *job* to worry!
You were out with *them* again, weren't you? That criminal gang!
That's not how I'd describe it.
How would you describe it, exactly?
For the first time in my life, I was doing something important.
Don't you see we're trying to *protect* you? You're young, you don't understand what could happen--you could end up like--
Like *Mia?* Like Ms. Walters?
I hadn't said their names in years. No one had.
--more and more terrorist incidents across the North American Union attributed to "The Utimates"...
Yes. Like them. Now please stop this. Before it's too late.

NOW.
For the first time since Ms. Walters, I had stopped waiting for the men with blurry faces to come.
BANG
BANG
WHAT DID YOU DO?!
For the first time, I wasn't afraid.
That was my big mistake.
Wren Montgomery! You have been tried in absentia and found guilty of affiliation with a terrorist organization!
Do not resist!
ZUMM
I should have been waiting for them.

Wren, RUN!
I should have been afraid.
-sigh- Another kid. I'm tired of shooting kids.
Me too.
How about slicing them in half?
Old school. I like it.

You are now on the UltNet.
S.O.S.! They found me! They came to my h-h-house! They k-k-k--
I need help! Now!
Hello? Is anybody there?!
No, they aren't. They resisted. Just like you resisted.
Wren?
Is everything okay?
N-no! Please! They're just our neighbors. I--I--I won't resist. No one else has to--

BLAM!
DIE, YOU FASCIST PIECE OF [redacted]!
What--? H-h--
We saw your message, dear.
Now here, take this and follow the route on your phone. Go!
Sh-she killed him! And then went that way!

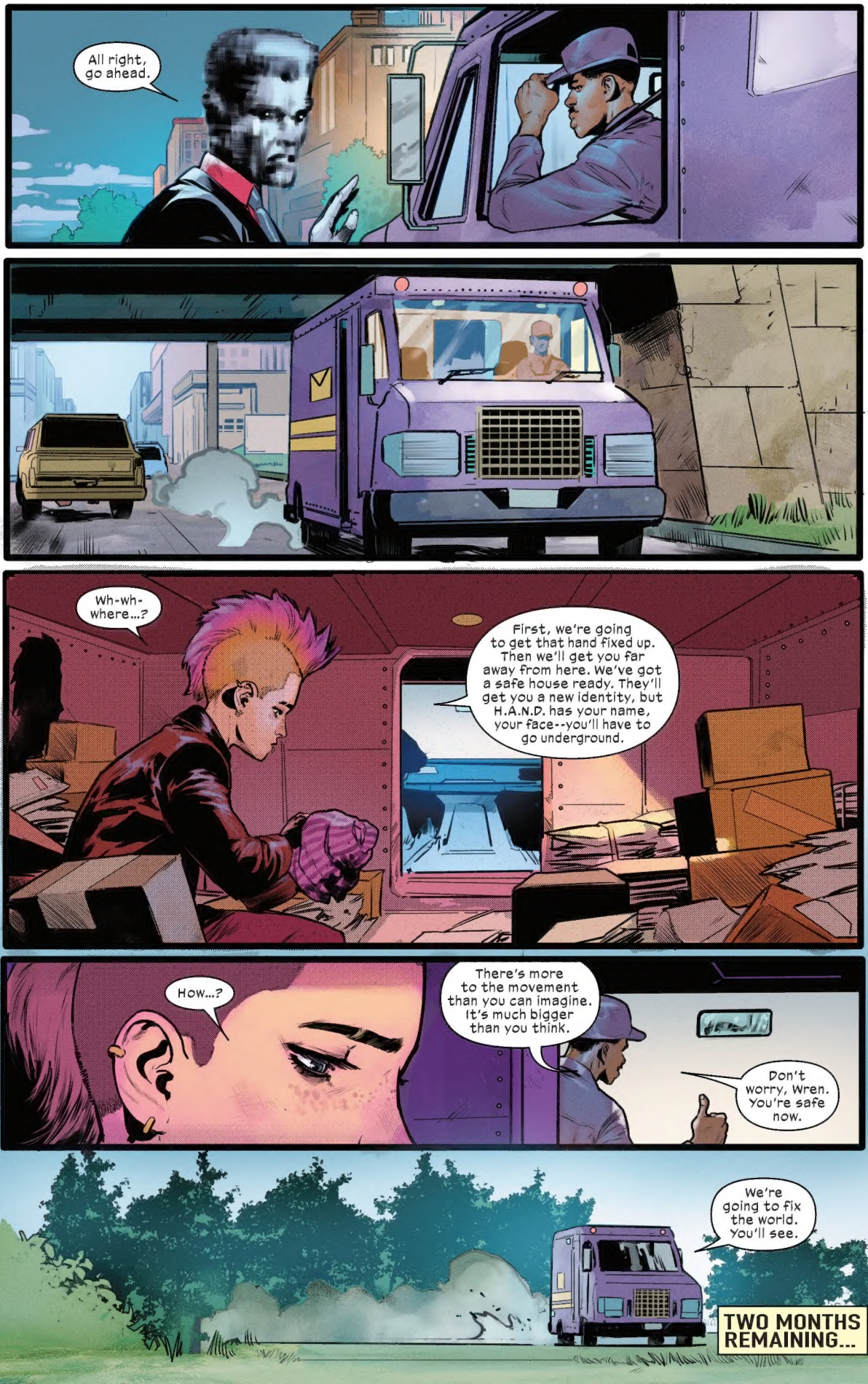
I knew those geezers were lying. I'll get them after.
BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM
TING TING TING TING
AHHH!
Man, the evidence factory will be working *overtime* to attribute all these deaths to you and your terrorist cell. I gotta admit, I can't imagine how a little girl like you killed one of us.
But we'll find out. You are under arrest. You have the right to months of physical and psychological torture. Anything you say or think can and will be used to hunt down and kill others like you. You have the right to weep and beg.

BLAM!

Keep going, girlie. Get to the rendezvous point!
You...?

Don't worry-- these are *my* streets. I know how to disappear. Go!

Get in!
J-J-Jeremiah?
FedUlx
Stop!
Have you seen a young girl running this way? She'd be wounded-- missing a hand.
Uh, no. I think I'd have noticed.


All right, go ahead.
Wh-wh-where...?
First, we're going to get that hand fixed up. Then we'll get you far away from here. We've got a safe house ready. They'll get you a new identity, but H.A.N.D. has your name, your face--you'll have to go underground.
How...?
There's more to the movement than you can imagine. It's much bigger than you think.
Don't worry, Wren. You're safe now.
We're going to fix the world. You'll see.
TWO MONTHS REMAINING...

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